Note

Reconciling the Controversy of Animal Cruelty and the Shoah: A Look at Primo Levi's Compassionate Writings

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SUMMARY

Is it ethically admissible to compare the suffering of Jews during World War II to the general suffering of animals in the Western world? Who consideres this parallel to be morally obscene, and who supports the comparison? Based on the historical evidence of Nazis insulting Jews with animal verbiage and herding them into the gas chambers of concentration camps, this study looks at a few textual examples by the Italian Jewish author Primo Levi, finding a conciliatory position in his poetry and prose.

KEYWORDS : Holocaust – Shoah – Primo Levi – Animal Cruelty – Violence – Slaughter – Suffering – Jewish – Auschwitz – Ethics

Our victimization of animals has served as the model and foundation for our victimization of each other. [... M]any Nazi practices were designed to make killing people seem like slaughtering animals. (Patterson 109)

The understanding of the ethical, legal and social connections between human animals (generally termed as "people") and non-human animals (generally termed as "animals") is longstanding, convoluted, emotional, homocentrically driven, and permeated with historical layers that further complicate the inter-species relationship. In the Western world, the Judeo-Christian description of the human/non-human connection is based on the unequivocal statement in *Genesis* sanctioning that human beings are given the right to rule the world.¹ Over the course of human civilization, animals have been used/exploited for their physical strength (in farming, especially before the advent of motorized agricultural vehicles), for their skins and fur, and for their edible meat. By the same token, animals have historically been hurt, experimented on, vivisected, tortured, and killed in the name of human science and other goals. Experiments on animals during the Renaissance and early Enlightenment were particularly heinous and cruel. When animals cried in pain, it was surmised by science that they were not able to reason, thus they lacked the ability to feel pain and suffering: their desperate shrieks were described by scientists as an instinctive, natural, and purely mechanical reaction.² The suffering of animals was/is denied by a rationalized response, allowing people to experiment on animals without showing compassion for their fate (or demise).

It is necessary, at some point, to observe the dynamics between the suffering of animals and the indifference of bystanders watching: the psychic of the perpetrators or of the indifferents has been numbed to the violence occurring against the victims. During the course of history, victims have been counted among animals as well as among humans. As in the case of victimized animals, when humans die by cruelty, their cries are silenced or ignored by the instigators. This indifference and numbing must hold true for the perpetrators of genocide. As Bartlett opines, this emotional numbing "dulls compassion [...] [in] humanity's willingness to engage in acts of barbarism and cruelty, to which the majority has become psychologically habituated and deadened" (156). Once a societally accepted and culturally supported taxonomy between human and non-human species ("specism") has been sanctioned, the next logical step becomes a taxonomy among humans, with some humans-better-than-others taking the top position, and other human minority groups becoming the target of an antropological neo-Darwinist approach. The "others," then, are viewed as holding physical or psychological aberrations which should be eliminated or dominated. Of course, such physical/psychological pathologies are subject to ebbs and fluxes over time, depending on social, economical, cultural, ethnic historical periods. It is at this point (whether intraspecies, or metaspecies, or extraspecies) that the fundamental concept of every living creature owning the right to its own existence is lost. "When a group becomes malignantly narcissistic, the collective will have an inclination to treat non-members as depersonalized objects" (Bartlett 164).

Comparing the victimization of Jews during WWII to the fate of disposable animals is a topic long both supported and despised. The step is not a difficult one to take: first, within a discussion of basic animal right, humans begin by denying that animals possess consciousness and claim that they do not feel pain, to conclude, then, that they do not suffer. The next step is to map out – according to arbitrary standards – 'superior' and 'inferior' human traits, just like they had been mapped out for animals, attributing some kind of moral justification for the former and despising the latter for the purported lack of desired qualities. The "Aryan" concept of superior race fits this pattern: human genocide (Jewish or other) is the alarming result of such thinking. In the past forty-some years, the most publicized example of the Jewish persecution represented as an animal-like experience was through Art Spiegelman's ground-breaking, two-volume allegory cartoon *Maus* (1986 and 1991). Spiegelman's narrative was either viciously criticized or highly praised when it was first published.

It should come as no surprise that when Charles Patterson's book, *Eternal Treblinka*. *Our Treatment of Animals and the Holocaust* was first published in 2002, the reviews spanned the whole gamut: some considered it an immoral task to create an explicit parallel between the Nazi transports of Jews to the concentration camps and the industrial processing of factory-farmed animals' meat in the Western world today. Others praised the volume for finally stating the obvious: both the Jews in WWII and factory-farmed animals raised for human consumption had/have no legal protection, no rights, and were/are killed under horribly cruel circumstances.³ The human species is, thus, considered at the center of reasoning, while animals are, by default then, deficient in some way (Bartlett 149). Comparing farm animals' exploitation with the Shoah [Holocaust] is, for sure, a touchy subject – probably an understatement.⁴ Patterson is not the first to bring to the forefront

what 1978 Nobel Prize Laureate in Literature Isaac Bashevis Singer termed the destiny of all animals as an "eternal Treblinka" due to their treatment from humans.⁵ In his work, Patterson stresses that in humankind's historical exploitation of animals lies the intrinsic premise for the Nazis' 'superior race' which is entitled to exterminate 'inferior' men. By referring to Jews as 'vermin,' 'pigs,' 'rats,' 'dogs,' etc., the Nazis desensitized the general German population against the horrors of the transportation and genocide of Jews, since - for centuries - animals farmed for human consumption had already been cruelly beaten and slaughtered without regards to their final welfare, and among the more or less general indifference of people. The systematic vilification of Jews, verbally compared to farm animals with no rights, was at the core, writes Patterson, of any cooperation with the Nazi regime in sending Jews to their death in WWII. Often, Primo Levi mentions in his autobiographical Se questo è un uomo (If This Is a Man) that German Nazi guards ridiculed the "fressen" of Jewish prisoners in Auschwitz, as they consumed their meager watered-down daily soups and stale bread.⁶ In German, "fressen" denotes a famished animal's feverish act of devouring, of desperately gorging down its long-needed meal. The expression also became to mean "eating like a pig," in the sense of having no manners, of eating savagely, in a way not appropriate for any human being. Jews were considered Menschentiere by the German population: "animal-people," or "beast-people." When human beings are compared to animals, it becomes more acceptable to annihilate them in death camps, like factory-farmed animals are/were, is Patterson's main and credible theory. During the Jewish annihilation, the horrors of the death camps became an abstract commonplace in Germany and in the occupied territories, as was the Jewish genocide. The point of Patterson's volume is to create a parallel between the modern slaughterhouse industry and with historical farming: animal exploitation by the billions each year. The parallel is both in the cruelty perpetrated in both cases, as well as in the attitude of anyone in contact – centrally or even just marginally – with the killings: choosing not to face its intrinsic violence. Many reviews on Patterson's book were scathing: human animals do not like to be compared to non-human animals, not in their suffering, not in their right to live peacefully.⁷

The 'Aryan' population at large pretended not to know and not to see the fate of the Jews in WWII, in a manner significantly similar to that in which – still today – people prefer to ignore the irrefutable actions of animal cruelty perpetrated against factory-farmed animals while they are being confined and raised for meat, on their way to slaughterhouses, and during the killing itself. Patterson states that it is easier to buy pre-packaged supermarket meat which no longer resembles at all the animal, than to familiarize one's self with the suffering imposed on the animal that one eats. In a pattern of similar indifference, the cremated ashes of millions of Jews were easy to ignore even when obviously and visibly floating downstream the river Vistula, in Auschwitz. The smell of burned flesh through the camp's chimneys was ignored by all but a few outside the barb wire of Auschwitz.

The controversy of comparing the Shoah with the cruelties of the Western, industrialized meat industry grew stronger in 2003 when the well known organization PETA (People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals) launched its photographic campaign "Holocaust on Your Plate" in the Unites States and in Europe.⁸ The exhibit consisted in several 6-by-10-foot billboards showing pictures of Jewish Shoah victims juxtaposed to today's factory-farmed animals in horrible living conditions. Reactions were strong, and mostly negative, coming likewise from vegan, vegetarian,

and omnivorous sources. The complaints focused mostly around the fact that animal life is, generally, viewed as having a value inferior to human, thus animals' utilitarian value comes with a natural subjugation to human primacy. Another major point of contention was the difference in scope of the murders: Jews were killed because Nazi politics required their eventual complete annihilation, whereas killed farmed animals were/are successfully, rapidly replaced in equal numbers because their generational presence was/is needed in order to continue to feed the human race at an evergrowing rate. After all, the protests went, gassed Jews were not eaten by the perpetrators. Public offence to the PETA exhibit was taken when the lives of animals were equated to the lives of Jews, or to people of any religion or ethnic descent, for that matter: animals are animals, humans are humans, the Western Judeo-Christian tradition dictates. It was the perceived trivialization of the importance and superiority of human life that was at the core of the protests. To be true, however, there was also a minority of strong, favorable reactions to PETA's "Holocaust on Your Plate" campaign: some voices were Jewish, some were not, and all opinions stressed the need to end the cycle violence against factory-farmed animals at every stage of their life. While many Jewish survivors and their families took offence against the parallel created by the PETA campaign, PETA's point was made: factory-farmed animals suffer continuous cruelty during their brief, exploited, confined life, and have no say over their own destiny. In today's world, humans seem to exhibit a collective "deficiency of empathy" against animal suffering (Bartlett 165). Famously, Isaac Bashevis Singer stated, "For years I wanted to become a vegetarian. I didn't see how we could speak about mercy and ask for mercy and talk about humanism and against bloodshed when we shed blood ourselves - the blood of animals and innocent creatures" (Patterson, "Animals," 15).9

There is much research connecting animal abuse and animal cruelty to domestic and human violence. The topic exploded scholarly in the late '80ies and early '90ies, even though both empirical and anecdotal evidence long corroborated those studies. Oral and written narratives of women seeking refuge in battered women's shelters in the USA were recorded, testifying to the connection between the abuse of domestic pets and the violent physical control of women who sought protection from their partners or from their violent children. A 1998 study by Frank Ascione scientifically verified and validated the long-held anecdotal suspicion of the "prevalence of animal maltreatment in a sample of battered women." ¹⁰ The connection between bullying, physical abuse and animal cruelty continued to be studied, has become a fertile field of scholarship in the past couple of decades, and has taken off as of late. Just a few years ago, Bill Henry and Cheryl Sanders delivered an excellent piece of serious research, backed up by irrefutable data, entitled "Bullying and Animal Abuse: Is There a Connection?". Of course, their research is relevant within the parameters of Shoah Jewish victimization because Jews were viewed by the Nazis and by the majority of the German population at the time as "vermin" and inferior animals that should be consequently annihilated so as to free the so-called "Aryan" race of a disgraceful "Menschentieren" Jewish genetic co-mingling. When analyzing their sample of 185 college-age males, Henry and Sanders concluded that "those who were above the median [...] of perpetration [of] physical bullying exhibited the [...] lowest levels of sensitivity with regard to cruelty-related attitudes pertaining to animals" (107). There is much more corroborating and factual evidence in this study to prove without a shadow of a doubt that abuse and cruelty against animals leads to desensitization of violent acts perpetrated against humans. As Nazi verbiage belittled into animal status the Jews of the Western world, compassion for their fate and support of their human rights failed, just as little or no compassion has

been historically shown for the living conditions of animals in Western culture. Indifference and cruelty against animals is closely associated, research proves, to indifference and cruelty against the weakest and least protected humans of society, traditionally women and children, but one should include marginalized and scape-goated minorities, as well. Keeping in mind that violence in all likelihood breeds violence, it is understandable that people who participate in violence "might be experiencing a deficit in the development of empathy" (Henry 109). Abuse of domestic animals is mostly a learned behavior, for Henry's sample indicates that the college-age males' first instance of animal cruelty was between the ages of 6 and 12 (58%), and between 13 and 18 (32%). Perpetrators "have learned that violence and intimidation are appropriate and effective means of social interaction" (Henry 122). In the study, "animal cruelty" was defined as creating intentional harm to animals for no apparent reason. Statistically, then, one infers that 90% of male abusers begin active animal cruelty before the age of 18, and that the same sample has, by the age of 18, built its strong correlation between the history of bullying and (multiple) acts of animal abuse. There is, then, a specific, fertile window when youngsters are impressionable and learn such behaviors. "Thus, those who reported having been involved in two or more acts of animal abuse reported less distress regarding cruelty towards animals [...]" (Henry 119). While it is of the utmost importance to tread lightly, and be careful to others' sensitivities in weaving a hypothetical comparison between suffering people (Jews in WWII) and animals exploited and violated for human use and consumption, after reading Henry's study (among others), one cannot be blind to the obvious connection between bullying and animal abuse as present in his sample. Even though the "base rate of animal abuse tends to be substantially lower among women than among men" (Henry 124), female Nazi-Kapo perpetrators were very much present in German concentration camps, cruelly 'disciplining' Jewish female-"vermin" prisoners. The fate of Jewish women in the camps was, perhaps, even more helpless than that of men.

Jewish history, culture, and tradition are heavily intertwined in a relationship with animals: just to mention one aspect of this connection, kosher laws strictly sanction the slaughter of edible meat, and indicate which animals may or may not be consumed. Whether Askenazi, Sephardic, or of other geographical or cultural origin, almost all Jews, secular or religious, are fully acquainted with the dietary laws of Kashrut.¹¹ Over the centuries, Jews have written about animals (companion or utilitarian), and about their mutual bond. The Italian author Primo Levi (1919-1987) is no exception. Agnostic throughout his whole life, Levi neither advocated for, nor denied the traditional, theological Judeo-Christian pecking order between human and non- human animals. In fact, he often recognizes the submissive role of animals vis-à-vis humans. Both in his poetry as well as in his prose, Primo Levi devotes a certain amount of attention to animals. Belpoliti and Gordon have studied Levi's use of animals in his writings, noting that "animals [...] are all-pervading presences [...] as metaphors, models, and myths [...] tools for understanding behaviour" (52). The most obvious use of animals in Levi is to explain the "dehumanizing effect of Nazi treatment of Jewish prisoners as one of 'bestialization" (53).

Levi writes of animals with respect and compassion. In his short story "Contro il dolore" ("Against pain", part of his collection of short stories entitled *L'altrui mestiere* [*Other People's Trades*]), Levi takes a clear ethical stand when he declares that all animals (human and non human) are living creatures capable of experiencing pain (physical and psychological), and that commonknowledge, moral rules of humankind would dictate never to knowingly cause pain to any creature who is vulnerable to it. In Levi's writings, some animals are depicted as servile and exploited (such as farm animals, working horses, etc), while others are elevated to intellectually admirable positions (i.e., the highly socialized animals, such as bees and ants; and the mythological animals - such as the Centaur with whom Levi often likes to identify himself). Levi affords each animal the dignity of its own instinctual behaviors. In the short story "Ammutinamento" ("Mutiny," part of his collection Vizio di Forma), Levi writes of a perceptive young girl, Clotilde, who lives in innocent harmony with butterflies, crickets, spiders, pets, and other forms of animal life which surround her. At one meaningful point, she engages the reader in an explanation of why plants should be allowed to grow free in the dirt, without forcing them into pots. Potting roots is akin, she explains, to enclosing animals in cages: "they [animals] become either stupid or mean, in other words they are no longer themselves, and it is our egotism that confines them so strictly only for the pleasure of watching them." ¹² As the girl walks into a dog's territory, it barks; immediately and courteously, understanding intuitively and perfectly the territorial nature of canines, Clotilde apologizes to it, explaining that "he did right to bark, it was his job [...] She spoke in such a calm and persuasive tone of voice that the dog immediately quieted down." ¹³ Levi never advocates for forcing animals into doing what they do not want to do. As a scientist, Primo Levi fully understands the instinctual zoological needs of animals, and the powerful draw towards one's natural impulses. In a short story published in the magazine Airone with which Primo Levi often collaborated with a series of zoological literary sketches, Levi wrote, upon observing a giraffe in a zoo that "I realized how huge is their need for freedom of wide planes, and how cruel it is to force them within the bars of a cage." ¹⁴ Although Levi never explicitly takes any official position on animal rights or similar issues, he consistently and clearly writes with great compassion about any non-human animal who is abused to the point of not being able to lead a meaningful life. Levi often pronounces himself against any harsh treatment and against forced confinement of animals. His short story "Lo scoiattolo" ("The Squirrel" of L'altrui mestiere [Other People's Trades]) ends with Levi confessing to having turned off - one night while closing the lab where he worked, and when no one else was around too see him - the small motorized wheel where an exhausted lab squirrel was forced to keep walking, due to an experiment on the consequences of insomnia. "The squirrel was exhausted [...] and it reminded me of the oarsmen of the galley ships, and of the forced-labor workers in China who were made to walk for days on end in cages similar to that one, in order to lift water to be used for the irrigation channels." ¹⁵

One of Primo Levi's poems ("Schiera bruna," "Dark Band," dated 13 August 1980) weaves a particularly poignant comparison between a colony of working ants and Levi's memory of forced work in the Nazi concentration camp. The urbanized ants operate dangerously close to some metal trolley tracks, always in imminent danger of a violent death. After 14 lines, Levi's poem, interrupted midway, takes a sudden turn: "I don't want to write about it, / I don't want to write about his band, / Don't want to write about any dark band." ¹⁶ Levi's memory of the forced labor in Auschwitz is so painful that he cannot continue observing the ants' skilled and untiring working force, without an overwhelming sense of disconsolate dejection. Several poems in Levi's volume have an animal as protagonist. "The Elephant" (dated 23 March 1984) is written in the animal's first-person voice, as he protests against the absurdity of his death while descending into the Alps (a hint to his role during Hannibal's second Punic war). He denounces his becoming an animal prisoner to human's warfare, eradicated from his original land, and forced to die for a war that was not his. "Would

you like to hear my story? It's brief / The cunning Indian trapped and tamed me, / The Egyptian shackled and sold me, / [...] / It was absurd that I, a tower of flesh, / Invulnerable, gentle and terrible, / Forced here among these enemy mountains / [...] / I've hurled my useless dying trumpeting / at these peaks / Livid in the sunset: "Absurd, absurd." ¹⁷ Levi's compassion for this animal forced to do what he does not want to is evident throughout the whole poem. Levi expresses in his poems a voice of emotion and of frustration, for himself and for other creatures who, like him, have suffered profoundly by not being in charge of their own destiny. Levi shows compassion for the animals of yolk in his works, for they, too have been enslaved and exploited. In another example, written on 30 September 1983, Levi's poem "Pearl Oyster" ("Meleagrina") makes explicit the same kind of pain which both human and non human experience. The pearl oyster speaks, concluding the poem: "I'm more like you than you imagine / Condemned to secrete, secrete / Tears, sperm, mother-of-pearl and pearls. / Like you, if a splinter injures my mantle / Day after day I cover it over silently." ¹⁸

I would submit that a large part of Primo Levi's compassion towards the suffering of nonhumans does, in fact, stem from Levi's own first-hand experience of being a slave prisoner in Auschwitz, of having suffered profoundly (both physically and psychologically) while in the camp, and having succumbed to a complete lack of control over his own fate and survival in Auschwitz. Like the other Jewish prisoners, Levi knows first hand what it meant to be treated by the Nazis like an animal with no rights. The human agency lost in the camps indicates a full loss of the sense of being human, when 'human' is defined as having free will. In the camps "the transformation from human beings into animals was well on its way," writes Levi in "Useless Violence" (The Drowned and The Saved). Whether one sympathizes or not with PETA's ad campaign (the American Anti-Defamation League denounced the project as a horrid trivialization of the Jewish suffering in the Shoah), the fact remains that such a comparison of human and non-human sufferings constitutes a heartfelt topic, on both sides of the ideologies. By de-humanizing Jews and reconstructing their identity as akin to animals', Nazis were able to habitually perpetrate murder and torture in the camps, for such is the a pattern that humans have used against animals for centuries, denying them any right to their own lives. Giving a voice to the voiceless victims of violence (humans and non humans) is a moral imperative that many theologies and civil-right movements consistently encourage.

Other Jews have compared their fate during WWII to that of animals. Some, in fact, protest that animals may have been treated better than Jews. Testimonies to this effect are indeed numerous. Piero Terracina, an Italian Jew who survived the horrors of the Shoah, said in an interview with Lia Frassineti that while he and his companions were being transported in the cattle car towards Germany, "while he tries to guess what his comrades are thinking, he asks himself what might happen today if some people were to hear, in a train station, the wailful lamentations of animals locked inside a wagon for hours without any food or water. He imagines that someone would call an animal protection agency and that the newspapers would report, scandalized, on this" (Frassineti 22).¹⁹

In his writings, Primo Levi – who is generally not militant in most political and social issues – finds a way to embed in between the lines, like other Jewish authors who survived the concentration camps and the Shoah, a strong implicit judgement on humans' treatment of weaker beings, to include animals, and on how his own suffering has led him to be more compassionate towards oth-

ers' suffering. Levi writes about the connection that exists among the life forms of all beings on this planet, and about the responsibility that every human carries in never knowingly procuring harm against other forms of life.

I would argue that Levi's own writings on animals give them, voiceless creatures, a lasting voice of dignity and self-respect. May this be acknowledged as one of Primo Levi's strongest legacies.

Endnotes

- 1. "And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth," Genesis 1:28, King James Version. In the Judeo-Cristian world, homocentrism finds its justification and validation in this passage of *Genesis*. This "putative uniqueness of man" is, ironically, well placed for a species that happens to be "at the top of the food chain" (Bartlett 159). Bartlett goes so far as to postulate that humans behave like parasites. The main goal of a parasite is to survive without any regard for the exploitation of its host. Any taxonomy that places humans at the top of a hierarchical pyramid necessarily implies "genetic selfishness. In the human species, the genetic selfishness of the parasite has taken the form of our species' centrism, our opportunistic exploitation of environmental resources, and our species' disregard for the degree to which human activity and reproduction displace and exterminate other forms of life" (169).
- 2. It is well known that the French philosopher René Descartes (1596-1650) espoused that animals feel no pain, for, in his opinion, they lack consciousness: their recoiling against physical pain inflicted cruelly against them was nothing but an instinctual, mechanical reaction. Obviously, anyone who has observed animals, especially those humans who have pets, know that they experience, and react to, hunger, fear, pain. Some show sublime maternal instincts, too. Finally, during the late Enlightenment, it was established that animals are in fact capable of perceiving physical pain (Williams).
- 1. At the moment of this writing, Patterson's book is in its fourth printing, and has been translated into 12 languages (http://www.excellenteditor.com/works.htm). For a smattering of positive reactions, see http://www.powerfulbook.com/reactions.html. To clarify the legal status of animals in the United States: from a legal point of view, today in the United States animals are classified as property, thus have no inherent rights, other than those afforded to the owners of such property. Animals are deemed to be inanimate, disposable things. Animals fall into a somewhat gray legal area, in that they are not humans, yet they are not inanimate objects, either (plaintiffs who have tragically lost animals may be awarded damages of some sort, depending on the specific circumstances). As much as there is some animal anti-cruelty legislation in most US states, the Animal Welfare Act (1966) was originally signed into law to regulate "the care and use of animals in the laboratory, it has become the only Federal law in the United States that regulates the treatment of animals in research, exhibition, transport, and by dealers." Animals raised for clothing or for food are not included in its regulations and protections. (From the USDA web-

site. http://awic.nal.usda.gov/nal_display/index.php?info_center=3&tax_level=1&tax_subject=182)

- 2. For etymological reasons, this essay refers to the "Holocaust" as "Shoah," instead. The verbiage "Holocaust" remains, of course, when citing others' use of it.
- 3. "In his thoughts, Herman spoke a eulogy for the mouse who had shared a portion of her life with him and who, because of him, had left this earth. 'What do they know all these scholars, all these philosophers, all the leaders of the world about such as you? They have convinced themselves that man, the worst transgressor of all species, is the crown of creation. All other creatures were created merely to provide him with food, pelts, to be tormented, exterminated. In relation to them, all people are Nazis; for the animals it is an eternal Treblinka." Isaac Bashevis Singer, "The Letter Writer," in his *Collected Stories*.
- 4. The American edition changed the title of the British translation into Survival in Auschwitz.
- 5. As an example among many, see Sanford Pinsker's book review on *Eternal Treblinka*: "[Patterson's] effort to link the Holocaust with animal rights strikes me as both deeply flawed and profoundly obscene [...] ends up trivializing the millions who went to their deaths in the Nazi juggernaut."
- 6. The photographic exhibit opened in Berkeley, California. Especially one of the assertions made in the PETA exhibit offended Jewish groups world wide: "Like the Jews murdered in concentration camps, animals are terrorized when they are housed in huge filthy warehouses and rounded up for shipment to slaughter. The leather sofa and handbag are the moral equivalent of the lampshades made from the skins of people killed in the death camps." (Reported in http://www.helium.com/items/1322561-animal-rights-and-the-holocaust/print)
- 7. Bashevis Singer permanently turned to vegetarianism in 1962, at the ange of 58. He had previously experienced vegetarianism on and off.
- 8. Ascione's article contains a thorough and excellent bibliography on the topic, recommended to those who may want to pursue further this line of research. Ascione's study is meaningful, still today, for the historical and ground-breaking importance it carried in uncovering the connections between pets and human victims of domestic violence. He was an academic pioneer in this field.
- 9. "Ritual slaughter is known as *shechitah*, and the person who performs the slaughter is called a *shochet* [...]. The method of slaughter is a quick, deep stroke across the throat with a perfectly sharp blade with no nicks or unevenness. This method is painless, causes unconsciousness within two seconds, and is widely recognized as the most humane method of slaughter possible. The *shochet* is not simply a butcher; he must be a pious man, well-trained in Jewish law, particularly as it relates to kashrut. In smaller, more remote communities, the rabbi and the *shochet* were often the same person". (http://www.jewfaq.org/kashrut.htm). See also Rabbi Kertzer's text (section III, 9 :"What is Keeping Kosher?", 87-90).

- 10. My translation. "Appunto per questo non si deve tenere piante e fiori nei vasi, perché è come chiudere le bestie in gabbia: diventano stupide o cattive, insomma non sono più le stesse, ed è un egoismo nostro metterle così allo stretto solo per il piacere di guardarle."
- 11. My translation. "Lui faceva bene ad abbaiare, era il suo mestiere [...] Parlava a voce così tranquilla e persuasiva che il cane si quietò subito."
- 12. My translation. "Osservandolo, mi sono reso conto di quanto sia grande il loro bisogno della libertà dei grandi spazi, e di quanto sia crudele costringerli entro le maglie di un reticolato." (Belpoliti, *Primo Levi*, 54).
- 13. My translation. "Lo scoiattolo era esausto [...] e mi ricordava i rematori delle galere , e quegli altri forzati in Cina che venivano costretti a camminare per giorni e giorni entro gabbie simili a quella per sollevare l'acqua destinata ai canali d'irrigazione".
- 14. Transl. Ruth Feldman
- 15. Transl. Ruth Feldman
- 16. Transl. Ruth Feldman
- 17. My translation. "Mentre cerca di intuire cosa stiano pensando i suoi compagni si trova a domandarsi cosa accadrebbe oggi se della gente ascoltasse in una stazione i lamenti di animali chiusi da ore dentro un vagone senza acqua o cibo. Immagina che qualcuno telefonerebbe alla protezione animali e che i giornali ne scriverebbero scandalizzati."

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